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# BACH-BUSONI

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*Piano Works*

Instructive Edition

Volume I

The Well-Tempered Clavier – First Part  
Book 3: BWV 862–869

Translation


*for EB 6862*

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## Translation of the Remarks within the Music Text

Translations of German words or abbreviations are given from top to bottom and at each tier from left to right. They occur once for each piece.

Words and phrases that Busoni emphasized by spaced type are underlined in the translation for better visibility. The rare original underlining is represented by a double line.


The symbol  represents one or various consecutive music samples in the German text.

### Praeludium XVII

p. 13:

*With a certain festivity. NB.*

according to Hoffmeister: 

**NB.** This introductory piece seems to us festive and ceremonial, even though the rather paltry setting does not do justice to these character traits. In order to display them, expanding the piano writing would seem appropriate as follows: 

Tempo somewhat broader than originally measure




p. 15:

or:   
etc.

### Fuga XVII

p. 16:

*Measured, though not dragging*

1) The subject is formed from the motiv  and its augmented repetition . It is nevertheless used trochaically . The modifications that the interval sequence of the subject undergoes, depending on whether it appears as a *dux* or *comes*, in *minor* or *major*, show a remarkable difference and require special attention.

2) The sixteenth-note figure plays an obligatory role, is therefore important and must always be clearly audible, even somewhat insistent (though certainly not sentimental!).


3) In this three-voice episode (sequence) and its subsequent three imitations lies the characteristic moment for the present fugue's development. Compare these passages with those kindred in spirit and form in the second part of the E major fugue (IX, note 3).

p. 17:

4) Inversion of the figure discussed in note 2.

p. 18:

5) Observe the ascending thematic chain in the four-voice succession.

6) The “inner voice” heard in the resolution is to be experienced as 

**NB.** The editor apportions the form as follows

Part I Exposition = 6 measures.

Epilogue = 3 measures.

Part II 1st section. Tenor, three-voice episode I (sequence) = three measures.  
Alto, three-voice episode II = three measures.

2nd section. Free measure, tenor, alto, three-voice episode III = five measures.

Modulatory-thematic transition = two measures.

3rd section. Alto, soprano, three-voice episode IV = four measures and a quarter note.

Part III (beginning on the second quarter)

Ascending thematic chain: bass, tenor, alto, soprano = four measures. (cf. note 5)

Episode. Soprano, resolution = five measures.

The length ratio of the three parts to each other: 1:2:1 (= 9:17:9 measures) is the most satisfying.

### Praeludium XVIII

p. 19:

1) Except for the following seven eighth notes and the last measure and a half, which are written in four voices, this prelude – we consider it as belonging to the genre of Inventions – is written in pure three-voice setting (triple counterpoint).


p. 20:

2) Emphasize the development of the inverted motif: alto, soprano, bass.



3) The sequence formula appears at first to take up the whole measure (a), then to be contracted to the half measure (b), then to the quarter measure (c).

## Fuga XVIII

p. 21:

- 1) The motif , not actually belonging to the subject, almost always follows on its heels, albeit often in a voice different from that of the subject itself.
- 2) This highly expressive second countersubject may almost compete with the main subject in the importance granted in the performance.
- 3) Strike these chords (the closing formula of the first countersubject) very solidly and not too short.

p. 22:

- 4) The episode motif evolved from the free inversion of the subject . The altered phrasing is due to the fact that in the new version, the subject motif's short (light) end note becomes the long (main note). (+) The aesthetic rule of contrast also justifies the alteration.
- 5) Here, a harmonic device turns the otherwise questioning character of the subject's descending second into an affirmative one.
- 6) If these intervals of a second were to be related to the subject , then they would have to be performed as slurred. We derive them, though, from the surplus subject motif (cf. note 1).

## Praeludium XIX

p. 23:

**NB.** Hitherto, the essence of this prelude does not seem to have been properly recognized. In it we see a fughetta, constructed most elegantly on three subjects, of which the two calmer ones are treated somewhat more freely, though not therefore necessarily appearing subordinate. The exposition is perfect, in that each of the three subjects is given in all voices. The development section is indeed hardly developed and free of polyphonic arts (except for the exemplary triple counterpoint forming the whole piece's basic idea); yet it is precisely this fact that stamps the prelude as a fughetta, distinguishing it from the higher fugue genre.\* The structure can be outlined as follows:

Part I: Exposition, ten measures and a modulatory measure = 11 measures.

Part II: 1st section. The three subjects in *F sharp minor*.


Three-measure episode = 5 1/2 measures.

2nd section. Subjects appear twice in the tonic = 5 measures.

Coda. 1st subject freely tapers off.


Hence, the two parts are of the same length.

\*) Think, for example, of the (10th) variation among Bach's 30 in *G major*, written in fughetta form, consisting of two single developments, without episodes and coda.



1) Rewritten thus for euphony. The true reading would be .

2) To facilitate playability, the entry of subject III is advanced by a sixteenth. (In general, the editor recommends observing the interesting variants of subjects II and III during the course of the fughetta.)

p. 24:

The three subjects that we designate in the text with Roman numerals for the sake of clarity, are  (or:)

Take this opportunity to compare it with the ninth three-part Invention (*in F minor*), very similar in form, whose subject in quarter notes is almost identical with the subject II here.

3) The plastic two-voice performance of the two subjects, intertwined here and elsewhere, requires a small supplementary study of its own. So far, we have not heard this a due pounded out otherwise than as so . In order to avoid this commonplace tone and at the same time to strike the right one, it is advisable to play the higher note in the upper voice a bit louder and the lower note a bit softer than the middle-voice notes. Take a quick breath just before the eighth rest. Shown in notation: .

## Fuga XIX

p. 25:

*supple*  
or

1) In Bach there is no trace of the rough *sforzato* on the subject's first eighth, as faithfully delineated by most editions, following Czerny.


p. 26:

2) Since the middle voice evidently has the figured countersubject, the subject now entering must consequently be the upper voice. It would sound very un-Bachian if the alto, answering in the third measure, were to present the subject twice in one and the same breath and register. Riemann lapsed into this erroneous assumption.

p. 27:

3) The fugue's development section falls into two sections, one quiet and one animated. The latter in turn is divided

into an antecedent and a consequent, whose boundaries touch at this point.



4) Despite the deceptive *F-sharp minor* sound of the first three eighth notes, the tonic key (*A major*) already prevails and will persist from here up to the end. (The more valid subject entrance would be, incidentally ) The section III beginning here is presented as a miniaturized portrayal of section II.

p. 28:

5) Bischoff calls this *G sharp* “somewhat disconcerting” and, in common with Kroll, lets himself be misled to prefer an *E*. We ask that the upper voice in the sixth and seventh measures of section III be compared with the alto passage in question here, to recognize the unquestionable legitimacy of the *G sharp*.


**NB. I.** This lack of rhythmic contrasts, of rhythmic structure, this velvety-soft pliability of tonal figures do seem somewhat outlandish for the pithy and angular Bach. The performer should not be reluctant also to highlight as well the “femininity” in his art.

**NB. II.** To the editor, worth mentioning would be the reciprocal thematic relationships of the *A major* preludes and fugues from volumes I and II. Compare:

Prelude from volume I. Fugue from volume I.   
Fugue from volume II. Prelude from volume II. 

## Praeludium XX


p. 29:

with *impetuous verve*  
or: 

1) The following setting would result in a livelier phrasing 

p. 30:


2) The editor utilizes the following thematic-symmetrical configuration: 




3) The tenor voice's thematic *E* should stand out; that is why it appears doubled. Otherwise,  would sound better.

## Fuga XX

p. 31:

II<sup>A</sup> Inversion

1) Considerable weight should be placed on the first motif of the countersubject,  which runs through the entire fugue.

2) An enriched kind of minor scale appears here in the alto voice. We would like to term it harmonic-melodic or a combined minor scale. Its peculiarity is based on the use of both sixths, the diminished and the augmented.  Riches are still to be had in practice that the theorists' paucity of imagination cannot apprehend. Thus, existing in reality, for example, is the scale  (just think of the everyday harmonic formula ) though it is not mentioned anywhere in the textbooks.

p. 32:

II<sup>B</sup> Stretto in normal motion

p. 34:

II<sup>C</sup> Stretto in contrary motion

p. 35:

III. Closest stretto

3) The stretto now beginning does in fact still involve a contrapuntal intensification, insofar as the imitation of the second voice also contains the dominant answer to the first (canon at the duodecima); because then the next stretto between the soprano and alto (in the inversion) starts before the earlier one has died away.

p. 37:

Resolution and coda


More modern execution of the organ point: 

4) Fermata: 


5) Strettos: between bass and tenor in contrary motion; then between soprano and alto in normal motion. The organ point is intended as a free pedal voice.

## Praeludium XXI

pp. 38/39:

1) This figure gives us the opportunity for exercises in wide leaps. Leaps in Bach's time were a bravura feat; they are, for example, a prominent feature of the Scarlatti technique. We recommend studying some of this master's sonatas in conjunction with the following variations.  measure 3 | etc.


We have repeatedly cited this method of notating that allocates the figures of alternating notes to both hands; thus, in the variants of the preludes in *C minor*, *C sharp*

*major*, of the fugue in *G major*. – Since Liszt imparted a new tone to this type of technique by deliberately imitating the cymbal, it has gained a powerfully modern sound, of the sort that at first might seem to be a mistake to associate with Bach. Its origins are earlier, though, reaching back to Bach and having roots in the keyboard instrument with two manuals. Passages of this kind can already be encountered in the pieces that Bach wrote for this instrument. As nowadays we do not have two keyboards available, we have learned to execute suchlike on one keyboard. The following examples, taken from Bach's Thirty [Goldberg] Variations, may demonstrate what has been stated: 

Even the hand-crossings characteristic of the composing for two keyboards, can be mastered on our grand piano with small modifications; the lack of smoothness that we perhaps perceive in the process is due only to its unfamiliarity. Do not leave untried the master's thirty variations (*G major*), heavily aiming at this kind of playing: they expand the mind and the technique.

p. 40

*very firm*

*according to Forkel:* 

or: 

2) Execution:  or: 

**NB.** Due to its virtuoso character, we call the piece a tocata. Little virtuoso pieces in the Bachian sense are still to be taken seriously. This is to be performed playfully (but not frivolously).


p. 41:

Study

Technical variants for Prelude XXI

p. 43:


**NB.** Playing wide-ranging broken chords without putting the thumb under requires permanent stability in finger-positioning, joint flexibility (pliability), lightness of touch (which naturally increases with speed of motion but must not degenerate into sound loss).

The editor suggests the following and similar figures, variously transposed, to prepare for and go along with the above study: 

To be taken here as high points of this kind of study might be Chopin's Etude op. 10, no. 11, which we recommend practicing in ascending and descending broken chords, and Liszt's Vision.

## Fuga XXI

p. 44:

**NB.** This fugue works strictly and exclusively with the subject and its two countersubjects; no other motivic material is even temporarily used. Development equates here to continually inverting the three subjects contrapuntally. Sequences formed from the last measure of the subject fill in the episodes; the inversion of the subject's first measure also gives rise to sequence chains counterpointing the first ones. 

Subject

Countersubject I | in the dominant | from here on as written

Countersubject II | in the tonic | (dependent on the subject from here on)

p. 45:

or according to Hoffmeister (simplified): 

The piece maintains definitely a comfortable character having neither spiritual depth nor height, without necessarily being vapid; its forms show, however, smoothness and roundness.

1) This and the following subject entrance – *dux* and *comes* transposed to the subdominant – belong together, opening what we consider to be the fugue's third section.

## Praeludium XXII

p. 46:

**NB.** Both the prelude as well as the fugue are of the sublime nature of those in *C sharp minor* and *E flat minor*. If we had the idea of a mighty cathedral in the *C-sharp minor* fugue, then we would like to compare the two *B-flat minor* pieces with artistic side chapels: those vaults preserving what is most precious.

To be emphasized in the prelude is its most consummate construction, of which we cannot do otherwise than reproduce the ground plan in a few brief strokes.

The soprano theme ascends step by step above an organ point and is freely imitated by the bass in the third and fourth measures. An interlude of two and half measures leads back in a way to the beginning. The soprano again takes over the theme, though this time gradually descending and modulating; in the tenth measure the alto imitates it (like the bass previously). The twelfth measure closes the first section in the dominant key by breaking off the theme (alto), now again ascending.


p. 47:

or (execution): 



What now follows is, in a certain sense, a development with the theme's motifs, lasting seven measures and reaching its climax exactly in the middle of the fourth measure. From then on, the line again descends, pausing before an organ point on *F*, on which the theme begins to ascend for the last time. Fermata, resolution, and coda are most closely related to the *G-sharp minor* prelude. The performer has the extremely difficult task of finding the right balance in the expression between seriousness and submission and spreading over this the twilight of an intangible sound color.

## Fuga XXII

p. 48:

1) The present fugue is related, not only spiritually but also thematically, to the one in *E flat minor*. The similarity of the subjects is so evident that perhaps for this very reason the commentators do not particularly mention it: Fugue in *E flat minor* 

Fugue in *B flat minor* (transposed for comparison) 

Ours also has a certain relationship to the subject of the *C-sharp minor* fugue : these two could be merged into a double fugue without too much ado; for example  (stretto) | etc.

2) In melodic terms, the next four quarter notes undoubtedly still belong to the subject; in contrapuntal terms, though, they are secondary; but the main element of this closing section of the subject, the quarter-note progression first descending, then reascending, has been developed as a whole.

3) Only with our three-line text representation is it possible to survey without confusion the tenacious cross-over soon beginning between alto and tenor; gained in this way is also a reliable distinction between the middle voices, which in all earlier editions and analyses show more or less imprecise borderlines.

p. 49:


or

4) The *e flat*<sup>2</sup> = first quarter note in the tenor, is to be held down, taking into account the same note in the soprano.

p. 51:

Executed representation of the stretto 

Variant I (Hoffmeister) 

Variant II (Schwenke) 

5) The *c'* is to be played again, because the newly entering voice starts with it.

**NB.** The exposition and its closing section ends with the twenty-fourth measure, in the parallel key.

The development consists of two larger, symmetrically designed sections, each of which contains a subject development in its first half and a single subject entry in its second half, followed by a longer episode. The second section of the development is a heightened image of the first in that the development (first half) is enriched by two strettos, the individual subject entry (second half) this time is appearing concurrently in two voices, but the subsequent episode is set in four voices (instead of in three voices).

In the third section, the insufficient expansion is fully compensated for by the closest five-voice stretto, heavily content-laden.

## Praeludium XXIII


p. 52:

*Calmly flowing.*

**NB.** We would like to call it a sound and mood study. Primarily, the goal is to establish a gentle touch that may be modelled on the soft types of woodwinds; it should unfold the tonal fabric in a calm half-light. Do not interrupt the mood's uniformity by an all-too-musical emphasis on the imitations that play only an auxiliary role here.

## Fuga XXIII

p. 54:

1) Prelude and fugue have basically one and the same theme/subject: 


p. 55:

Execution: 

2) The position of the subject corresponds here to the key of the subdominant (*E major*); according to harmony, though, it is in *C sharp minor*.

p. 56:

3) Through the harmony of the last three measures, the editor hears here, as he does in the close of the A-flat major fugue, an inner voice bearing the idea of a stretto.

We attempt to clarify our idea in notes 

**NB.** The exposition concludes at the same time with the subject in the fourth voice.



The second section is undeniably lacking in energy and inert, peculiarly stiff in its partially symmetrical structure.

A two-and-a-half measure episode, concluded by a solitary subject entry, appears three times during the development, the second time immediately after the first, in contrapuntal inversion and in the dominant key, later a third time in the subdominant key, this time expanded to three measures and without the subject's closing section.

Between the second and third episodes there is a complete development of the subject: soprano and alto in contrary motion, bass and tenor in normal motion.

The third section represents a third, incomplete development (with which note 3 is to be compared).

### Praeludium XXIV

p. 57:

Idea:

1) The tempo marking Andante comes from Bach, likewise, the double bar line at the close of the first section; unfortunately, the master's first and only manuscript instructions.

**NB.** This magnificent piece, incidentally, a prime example of double counterpoint over a basso continuo, most nobly concludes the wonderful third prelude series. Moved by the eager desire also to reveal to a wider circle this work's many still half-hidden beauties, and in an effort to find an easily appealing form of presenting it to the audience, the editor suggests stringing together smaller groups (selections) of preludes into suites that could be effectively used, even by average players, as concert numbers. The following compilation of four preludes (an example of many) would seem to us particularly advantageous:

Prelude in *B major*, as Prelude

Prelude in *A major*, as Fughetta

Prelude in *B minor*, as Andante

Prelude in *B flat major*, as Toccata (Finale)

For the sake of coherence, though, all the pieces would have to be in one key: the first three should thus be transposed to B flat: an aesthetic transgression that would presumably raise much unaesthetic howls. A good opportunity for a legato exercise in octave-playing results from consistently doubling the bass voice in this prelude an octave lower.

p. 58:

2) The content of this measure is identical with the motif of the fugue's episodes; definitely in the upper voices, varied in the bass. This relationship to the fugue is not singular; compare on this note 3.

p. 59:

3) In both the syncopated motif (a, b, c), and in the soprano's eighth figure in the penultimate measure, we see the following fugue anticipated; an anticipated reminiscence of the fugue subject: in the Prelude | in the Fugue

Intended or not – (if unintentional, all the more indicative of Bach's genius) – we find this thematic foreshadowing to be one of the most aesthetically effective transitions known to us. The chromatic bass (a variation of the initial quarter-note movement) is harmonically and contrapuntally of the highest beauty. Play it somewhat lingerly, expressively articulated, so that every harmonic detail will become comprehensible to the listener.

### Fuga XXIV

p. 60:

or as an upper mordent:

1) Bach stipulates the tempo as Largo and notates the whole fugue in c: (tempo ordinario)

The editor's experience is that for the eyes the many sixteenth-note figures evoke the idea of an allegro movement and easily mislead into hurrying. Our notation facilitates visualizing the heavy, weighty, as Bach intended it, and supports adhering to a definitely solemnly-measured movement. Also, the short slurs (trochaic phrasing) are authentic.

2) Who would here not be reminded of the subject of the fugue on the name Bach?

That the relationship with the motif b, a, c, h [b flat, a, c, b, in English music terminology] is not of merely a superficial but rather of a closely-harmonic kind, becomes a certain fact as soon as a few experiments are made with the subjects, e.g. in stretto

2b) Used as a contrast, the Bach motif appears once in this fugue, at the opening of the third section, in a form most closely related to our example b):

3) The obligatory fugal answer of the first countersubject may almost be recognized as having the importance of a second subject.

p. 61:


gentle

4) Execution:

p. 62:

5) If these frequently recurring episode sequences were not interpreted as ornamental representations of a the-



matic content, they would have too little significance and be, above all, too loosely related to the fugue's main sections. They are comparable to that foliage ornamentation from which, on closer inspection, all kinds of ornate human and animal figures evolve.  Free bass


p. 63:

or: 

Idea: 

6) In the case of very extended fugues – they are not always the most artistic –, it is one of Bach's idiosyncrasies – not to say, "mannerisms" – to repeat entire episodic periods transposed to the dominant, thus bringing a certain symmetrical order (reference points) into the contrapuntal swell [like waves on the sea's surface]. This is the case here.


p. 65:

7) The harmonic-melodic quintessence of this and the next measure consolidates into the following form: 


Compare with this the prelude's coda and its associated commentary.

p. 66:

(free voice)

8) The subject, first carried by the alto and migrating to the soprano at the third and fourth quarter notes of the penultimate measure, can be inwardly heard right up to the end: 

### General representation of the form

The harmonic basis of the subject is simpler than appears at first glance. Exposing, so to speak, its musculature, reveals the following: 

To be noted is that the third measure implies, as it were, the answer to the first.

Part I Exposition. Alto, Tenor, Bass, Soprano = 16 measures (ending on an unresolved half cadence).

Part II	Section I	Episode I (cf. note 5)	Alto subject entry	= 7 measures	} Transposition of the above.
			Imitative-modulatory transition	= 2 measures	
		Episode II (cf. note 6)	Tenor subject entry	= 7 measures	
			Imitative-modulatory transition	= 1 measure	

Section II Imitation with subject fragment between A. and S., imitative-modulatory transition, bass subject entry = 7 measures.

Imitation with subject fragment among S., A., and B., T. subject entry (*dux*, D major), answer of B. *comes*, (A major) = 9 1/2 measures.

Section III Imitative-modulatory transition extended to a three-measure episode.


T. subject entry, transition. B. subject entry (leading to the tonic key), = 10 measures.


Part III Section I Tenor subject (*B minor*). Episode III, (same as episodes I and II), = 8 1/2 measures.

Section II Tenor subject fragment, bass subject (from *E minor* to *B minor*), alto subject, = 8 measures.

We list two kinds of episodes, differing from each other in structure and motifs.

The first kind (classified as episodes I, II, III) is the more important; we have detailed them in notes 5) and 6).

The second kind that we differentiated as imitative-modulatory transitions, is formed from the first countersubject's final flourish  a motif that is usually developed in three or four voices.

To be mentioned, finally, is a third (secondary) kind of episode-motif.  (continuation of the first countersubject), which occurs in the exposition and at the beginning

of the development section in conjunction with the second kind of motif, only then to disappear almost entirely.

It is very exciting to follow this fugue's harmonic interweaving; it reveals the most splendid kind of recklessness.

\*) Compare, incidentally, the features that this first episode (measures seven and eight) have in common with those (in the sixth to ninth measures) of the B minor fugue.